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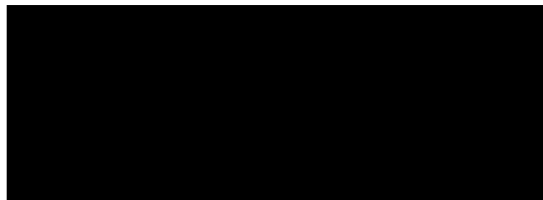
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
INFORMATION REPORT

25X1A

COUNTRY Spain

SUBJECT Mercury Production and Mining Practices

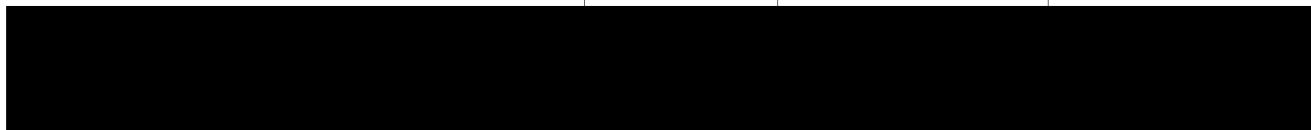
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1. The Spanish output of mercury comes almost entirely from one deposit, that of Almaden in the province of Ciudad Real, which is the largest known deposit in the world. It contains the richest known ores, averaging six to eight per cent mercury in the years 1940 to 1944.
2. The Almaden deposit consists of three almost parallel ore bodies, trending east and west and standing vertically side by side. Each embraces a portion of a bed of quartzite impregnated with cinnabar. The beds of quartzite are separated by beds of slate. The immediate enclosing rock is a breccia of Sillurian age.
3. The ore bodies tend to be small and highly irregular. Both surface and underground mining methods are used, the latter being the more popular. In general, mining methods are the same as for ores of other types. At the Almaden mine, one important departure is the elaborate use of masonry for supports instead of timber. It is claimed that more men are used for quarrying rock and building stone walls than for mining ore.
4. At Almaden, the ore is crushed and then treated by two different methods. In one process, the ore is mixed with metallic iron or lime to combine with the sulfur and free the mercury as metal. The mixture is heated in furnaces to 400°C with air excluded. In the other process, the ore is heated and air admitted. The sulfur is converted to sulfur dioxide and the mercury escapes in vapor form with the furnace gases from which it is condensed.
5. The Almaden mine is under government control.
6. The extent of reserves are the subject of conflicting reports. They undoubtedly will support average production for many years.

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